Successes & Future Plans
For CEST on Monday, 8 December 2014

EcoVillage Living-Learning Village
Successes

- EcoVillage - a community
  - 33% return rate
Successes

- Community Service
  - 1,539 hours
Successes

- Sustainable Planning & Urban Development Sightseers (SPUDS)
Successes

- Partnership with Waste Reduction & Recycling
Future Plans

- Further Development
  - Required 1 credit Fall course
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} Year Capstone Project

- SPUDS 2015: San Francisco
NC State Sustainability Office
Learning History Project

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Introduction to the Project

• An opportunity for reflection and organizational learning
• Synthesizes perspectives, insights, and lessons learned
• Ultimate intent:
  • Capture shared knowledge
  • Foster group dialogue on process improvement, goals, vision, and strategy
  • Strengthen the organization moving forward
  • Enable further action to support the success of on-going change efforts
Methods

- Interviewed 12 Sustainability leaders across campus including members from:
  - Academic Colleges
  - Campus Environmental Sustainability Team
  - Staff in the University Sustainability Office

- Interview questions were based around goals set with the Sustainability Office

- Analysis of the interview responses led to major themes

- To keep analysis close to the data, quotes used to put perspectives around themes in interviewees own words
Goals

1. Identify the history of campus sustainability from the perspectives of the major sustainability leaders, including past and present sustainability officers, staff, faculty and other key players. The history will include the role each person has played within expansion throughout the university.

2. Identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the current organization of campus sustainability efforts.

3. Identify each leader’s goals and what support he or she needs to be successful, to include resources, coordination, tools, organizational structure, etc.

4. Identify the vision that sustainability leaders have in regards to how to better integrate and support a culture of sustainability at North Carolina State University. Clarify how they see their role within this campus-wide movement. Clarify what role they would like the Sustainability Office to play to best support this movement.
What is Sustainability?

Sustainability on campus focuses on creating a balance of the environment, society and economy to ensure that future generations will have the resources necessary to thrive.
History

- Sustainability efforts have a long history at NC State
  
  1975: First Recycling by hand
  1999: First Sustainability Officer
  2000: Environmental Sustainability Task Force
  2003: The CEST created to accomplish the goals of the Task Force
  2008: Sustainability Office created
  2009: CEST gains co-chairs representing Facilities and Academics
  2011: Chancellor accepts CEST draft Sustainability Strategic Plan
  2014: Sustainability SOP approved
A University Perspective of Sustainability
Theme: Different stages of development between Academic Colleges and Facilities

● **Goal clarity**

  “Infrastructure is a better-monitored program. To me we do not have enough of a goal or series of discrete goals in the academic part, and it’s really there where I see a need for more progress. The Academic Colleges need some discreet goals and progress towards them.”

● **Measurability**

  “On the infrastructure side, we’re an engineering rich campus and we know how to measure things. So, that part is making progress. They have goals and they can track their progress.”
Theme: Barriers to change in Academic Colleges

- Limited available resources for formalized sustainability positions
  "If they do not have an official role in regards to sustainability then they have to balance publications and research with time spent in meetings for sustainability and working on those sustainability projects"

- No incentives for faculty
  "The problem with getting faculty to do these things is that those kinds of events are not what they are getting paid to do. They would say that they are underfunded, and they totally are"

- Differing definitions of sustainability
  "Put 20 people in the room and you’ll end up with 25 different definitions of sustainability"
Theme: Collaboration around sustainability across campus

- Progress is tied to good collaboration
  - May need a formalized network

“My hope is that we have a mapped out network. Maybe it’s a portal on the web that will direct our students for curriculum, research and if we had a university wide collaboration for industry engagement so that we didn’t have 15 people talking to the same outside organization. Then we could really get to doing university wide collaborations around research.”
Theme: Challenges to collaboration

- **Organizational silos**
  
  "Just as we are evolving out of the terminology of sustainability, I think we are evolving out of our structure at the university. We need a more comprehensive approach... that doesn't have us hitting the walls of the organizational silos."

- **Perceptions of ownership of sustainability**
  
  - Some interviewee concern that the Sustainability Office claimed ownership over all sustainability efforts at NC State.
  - Others think it is not about ownership, rather who has the resources to accomplish the goal.
  - Perceptions of ownership cause potential conflict, which can impede collaboration.

- **Perceived competition for students**
  
  "Sometimes sustainability efforts are either in parallel, or perceived as so, which occasionally results in perceptions of competition or unwillingness to coordinate. The parallel efforts that don't communicate well together may undermine each other by not collaborating."

- **Issues connecting students to faculty/ projects/internships, etc.**
Theme: The negative consequences of poor communication

- A lack of collaboration between sustainability leaders, specifically between Academics and Facilities, can hinder progress
  - One example: A unilateral decision on the Facilities side created hardships for academic research over a university holiday

“The sustainability report from the Sustainability Office does not take into account the science or get the knowledge from researchers and scientists. The academic world sometimes takes issue with certain definitions, namely, that they are not fully supported by the science or that the metrics are used incorrectly”
Theme: Possible solutions to the challenges in collaboration

- PackLink

  “I envision PackLink as an overarching umbrella of program that can connect anyone with anyone else for sustainability issues. But I think there is a bigger campus-wide conversation about how to get various students to interact where you could filter categories for any project or collaboration.”

- Poole College of Management Career tool
  - Linking business students to sustainability careers

- Continued coordination through CEST, ASL, etc.
Theme: Grassroots and Top-down Change

- Sustainability happened at NC State through both. Interviewees unanimous that both are required for continued growth and success

> "University leadership has been very supportive, but the grassroots efforts have been the key to our successes. Grassroots stand the test of time, but a marriage of both is best."

- Grassroots
  - Concern that top down change may be less inclusive and comprehensive than a community effort

> "We don’t want to use policy. We want to have sustainability as a part of the campus community and culture... not just one person’s opinion, it’s been integrated with the way the campus is run."

- Top-down
  - Direction from higher level officials would facilitate more investment in sustainability
  - From an academic perspective, this often means resources.
  - From a university perspective, it means the support to have a holistic discussion about sustainability at the university.

> "I do not see clear delegation of responsibility from somebody with enough authority to get people’s attention. And frankly, if you want to get faculty involved it will take money, direction and incentives."
Theme: What should be the new strategic direction for the university?

● The University is in year 4 of a 5-year sustainability strategic plan

● A lot has changed since 2011
  ● Definitions of sustainability
  ● Application in other fields
  ● Degree of community acceptance and integration into culture

● Pertinent questions interviewees identified were:
  ● How to properly position the university for the next five years
  ● How should change be led?
  ● Who should lead it?
  ● How is it best supported?
  ● How should sustainability leaders collaborate in the future?
ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE

“I hope that one day, there is not a need for us (Sustainability Office) because everyone is making it happen on their own, and sustainability is just a way of life.”
Theme: Roles and Responsibilities

● Should the Sustainability Office stay within Facilities only or does it have a broader role to play? Opinions vary widely.

● Grassroots growth may have blurred the lines
  ● The role of the Sustainability Office within the broader sustainability movement at NC State is simply not clear

“Roles and responsibilities are getting murky. Who does what? Whose role on a project is formal, or who is just interested in running with it? There is campus wide ambiguity about roles in sustainability.”

● The Sustainability Office sees a broad role for itself, including:
  ● Supporting the CEST
  ● Initiating sustainability programs
  ● Fostering collaboration
  ● Providing education and outreach to campus and community
  ● Assessing sustainability goals
  ● Help campus departments envision and implement programs
  ● Further integration of sustainability into university culture
Theme: Role in Academics?

- Some felt the Sustainability Office is a great support system for academics and can provide significant coordination and communication resources:
  
  "I'm not saying that the office should lead a research project but I think they can engage in some way. That seems like a win-win to me."

- Others disagreed:
  
  "The Sustainability Office should not be involved... integration of academic activities across campus will be the role of the ASL"

- Perspective from the Sustainability Office:
  
  "I don't think our office needs to drive the academics sustainability question; the faculty are the best direction for changing that. But, we can coordinate and provide resources."
Theme: Should there be a hub for sustainability at the university?

- Unanimous agreement that a hub for sustainability is necessary
  - Difficulty connecting students, faculty, and staff with resources such as information, projects, and internships
  - Faculty desire to link with other faculty working/researching similar concepts from different perspectives

“There is no clearinghouse of information for who is doing what regarding sustainability issues or initiatives at the university.”

“We kind of need to have this sustainability network more clearly sketched out so that everybody knows where the hub is.”

- Dissimilar viewpoints about who it should be
  - Faculty and staff who already viewed the Sustainability Office as a hub of sustainability at the University also saw value in further establishing them as such.
  - Others want the responsibility of connecting research and interacting with students to fall within the control of the Academic Colleges
Conclusion

Six questions to promote further dialogue about sustainability and change at the university:

1. How can we best provide a holistic approach and support a culture of sustainability for our students?

2. What are the short and long-term solutions to barriers in making changes in academics?

3. How can we better coordinate and collaborate sustainability efforts between Facilities and the Academic Colleges?

4. Is the current organizational structure on campus adequate to carry out strategies for the next 5 years? If not, what should it look like?

5. What strategies are available to increase our resources or to utilize resources more efficiently?

6. How can we address the evolving definition of sustainability in our future strategies?
Major Take-aways

1. Usefulness of synthesizing data into themes to describe numerous and diverse perspectives

2. Contradictory perspectives are common in organizations, yet not commonly understood by all stakeholders working toward similar goals
Questions?